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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 CPR-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06
/021 W
----------161301Z 016135 /43
R 160850Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2142

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, TH, US
SUBJECT: PHICHAI CRITICIZES THAI FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THANIN

REF: BANGKOK 9923

1. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAI RATTAKUN WILL SOON BE TRAVELLING TO THE USS (REFTEL), WHERE HE PLANS TO ADDRESS SUBJECT OF THAI FOREIGN POLICY IN SPEECHES AT NEW YORK AND SAN FRANCISCO. SINCE OUSTER OF SENI GOVT LAST OCTOBER, PHICHAI HAS BEEN RESTRAINED IN HIS COMMENTS ON THAI FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE THANIN GOVT AND CAREFUL NOT RPT NOT TO CRITICIZE PRESENT GOVT FOR ANY CHANGES HE MAY PERCEIVE. DURING SPEECH TO ROTARY CLUB OF BANGKOK, MAY 6, HOWEVER, HE SPOKE OUT AGAINST PRESENT GOVT'S FOREIGN POLICY. PHICHAI'S REMARKS WERE NOT CARRIED IN BANGKOK PRESS, AND WE KNOW OF NO OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ROTARY CLUB SPEECH.

2. IN MAY 6, SPEECH ENTITLED "THE FIVE LONG MONTHS" --THE PERIOD OF HIS TENURE AS FOREIGN MINISTER, MAY-OCTOBER, 1976-- PHICHAI DISCUSSED THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS ENCUMBANCY STRESSING THE ESTABLISHING OF FRIEDLY RELATIONS WITH KAMPUCHEA (AS HE CONSISTENTLY CALLED IT), LAOS AND VIETNAM. HE NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESENT GOVT HAD CONTINUED THE SAME POLICIES TOWARD THE LATTER TWO. WITH RESPECT TO KAMPUCHEA, HE WARMED THAT THE ANTAGONISTIC ATTITUDE OF THE PRESENT CAMBODIAN GOVT, COUPLED WITH "HIGHLY SENSITIVE MATTERS WHICH I WILL NOT DISCUSS HERE, COULD LEAD TO WAR BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES." (HE MAY HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO CAMBODIAN ALLEGATIONS OF THAI GOVT SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE ELEMENTS.)

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3. PHICHAI FALICITATED HIMSELF AND THAILAND ON ITS GOOD RELATIONS WITH ASEAN, WARNING AGAINST RELIANCE ON EITHER OF THE GIANT IDEOLOGICAL BLOCS AND URGING A COURSE OF NEUTRALITY FOR THAILAND IN THE FUTURE.

4. HE WAS SURPRISINGLY FRANK IN HIS REFERENCES TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, CONTRASTING THE DEMOCRATIC AND ELECTED CHARACTER OF THE SENI CABINET WITH THE APPOINTED CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT REGIME. AT ONE POINT HE LAUNCHED INTO A PERSONAL ATTACK ON THANIN, WHOM HE REFERRED TO ONLY AS "HE", SAYING THAT WHILE PHICHAI RESPECTED "HIS"INTENTIONS AND INTEGRITY, HE BELIEVED HIS FOREIGN POLICY TO BE A BLUEPRINT FOR DISASTER. PHICHAI DID NOT CLARIFY THIS POINT ANY FURTHER. WITH A PLEA FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND LESS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN NEIGHBORS OF DIFFERING STRIPES, PHICHAI CLOSED HIS REMARKS.
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